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The Basis of Culture

All quotes from Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*.

xix - "Culture depends for its very existence on leisure, and leisure, in its turn, is not possible unless it has a durable and consequently living link with the cultus, with divine worship." "Cult," for Pieper, means "fulfilling the ritual of public sacrifice."

xx - "Culture, in the sense in which it is used above, is the quintessence of all the natural goods of the world and of those gifts and qualities which, while belonging to man, lie beyond the immediate sphere of his needs and wants. All that is good in this sense, all man's gifts and faculties are not necessarily useful in a practice way; though there is no denying that they belong to a truly human life, not strictly speaking necessary, even though he could not do without them."

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5 - "servile work" vs. the "liberal arts" - Liberal arts are what prepares one for leisure. That is to say, and this is me speaking, the value of a liberal arts education can be

judged by what an educated man does in his spare time (ie, when he is not working for pay).

16 - just because something is difficult doesn't make it worthwhile. There is no correlation, in fact, between the goodness of something and its difficulty.

18 - "The inmost significance of the exaggerated value which is set upon hard work appears to be this: man seems to mistrust everything that is effortless; he can only enjoy, with a good conscience, what he has acquired with toil and trouble; he refuses to have anything as a gift."

29 - Leisure is "contemplative celebration," drawing its vitality from "affirmation." Pieper goes on: "Now the highest form of affirmation is the feast; among its characteristics, Karl Kerenyi tells us, is 'the unison of tranquility, contemplation, and intensity of life.' To hold a celebration means to affirm the basic meaningfulness of the universe and a sense of oneness with it, of inclusion within it. In celebrating, in holding feasts upon occasion, man experiences the world is an aspect other than the everyday one.

"The feast is the origin of leisure, and the inward and ever-present meaning of leisure. And because leisure is thus by its nature a celebration, it is more than effortless; it is the direct opposite of effort."

30 - "*Ratio*, in point of fact, used to be compared to time, whereas *intellectus* was compared to eternity, to the eternal now." Footnote?

31 - "The point and justification of leisure are not that the functionary should function faultlessly and without breakdown, but that the functionary should continue to be a man—and that means that he should not be wholly absorbed in the clear-cut milieu of his strictly limited function; the point is also that he should retain the faculty of grasping the world as a whole and realizing his full potentialities as an entity meant to reach Wholeness."

Obviously, I'm thinking of education throughout. Is it possible for young people to live this way? Can you conduct school in such a way that leisure—contemplation and affirmation—is woven into the fabric of the education? It would require a completely different foundation, meaning the students would have to be trained from a young age to value learning for its own sake. This is where Charlotte Mason can help.

33 - "The world of the 'worker' is taking shape with dynamic force—with such a velocity that, rightly or wrongly, one is tempted to speak of daemonic force in history." Remember that, for Pieper, "work" does not necessarily mean productivity, just activity. In that sense, his statement above could apply to our activities on the internet and on social media in particular.

41 - "Properly speaking, the liberal arts receive an honorarium, while servile work receives a wage. The concept of honorarium implies that an incommensurability exists between performance and recompense, and that the performance cannot 'really' be compensated." Cf. The Dorean Principle.

43 - Quoting Aristotle: "With what kind of activity is man to occupy his leisure?" This is exactly the question of a liberal arts education.

44 - "What, then, ultimately makes leisure inwardly possible and, at the same time, what is its fundamental justification?

"In posing this question we are asking again: can the realm of leisure be saved and its foundations upheld by an appeal to humanism? On closer inspection it will be seen that 'humanism,' understood as a mere appeal to a *humanum*, does not serve. "The soul of leisure, it can be said, lies in 'celebration.' Celebration is the point at which the three elements of leisure come to a focus: relaxation, effortlessness, and the superiority of 'active leisure' to all functions. **But if celebration is the core of leisure, then leisure can only be made possible and justifiable on the same basis as the celebration of a feast. That basis is divine worship.**" (emphasis in original)
This passage made me emotional—why? I dunno.

